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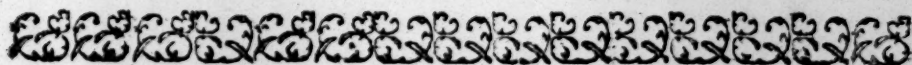
A

SERMON

PREACH'D AT

St. *Andrew's, Dublin.*

December the 8th. MDCCXXI.



Sabb. 9. Die Decemb. 1721.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Doctor *Robert Howard*, for the Excellent Sermon by him Preached before this House Yesterday at *St. Andrew's-Church*; And that he be desired to Print the same; And that Mr. *Chancellor* of the *Exchequer*, Mr. *Tighe*, Mr. *Carter*, and Mr. *Chaigneau* do acquaint him therewith.



<i>Bruen Worthington</i>	}	Cl. Parl.
and		
<i>Isaac Ambrose.</i>		Dom. Com.

A
SERMON

Preached at
St. *Andrew's*, DUBLIN,
Before the Honourable
House of Commons.

On Friday December the 8th. 1721.

B E I N G

The Day appointed for a *General Fast* and *Humiliation* throughout the Kingdom of *Ireland*; for deprecating the Divine Judgments which the Sins of these Nations have deserved; more especially the Dreadful *Plague*, which at this Time rages in some of our Neighbouring Countries, &c.

By Robert Howard, D. D. Chaplain to his
GRACE the LORD LIEUTENANT.

D U B L I N :

Printed for *Jes. and Sil. Pepyat*, Booksellers in
Skinner-Row, MDCCXXI.

N^o 2



Isaiah Chap. XLV. Vers. VII.

*I form the Light, and create Darknes : I make Peace,
and create Evil : I the Lord do all these Things.*



THE Wisdom of the Supreme Being, which so evidently discovers it self in the wonderful Contrivance of the Works of Nature, and the Government of the World, hath yet been pleased to mix so much *Evil* and Misery in Life, that it hath been often brought as an Objection against his Goodness, and hath made some Sceptical Atheistical Men introduce a contrary Independant Principle of Evil.

Which Notion as it is absurd and wholly inexplicable in it self, so it hath arisen from Men's mistaking the true Design of Providence in this Life, and the *End* he proposed in the promiscuous Mixture of *Good* and *Evil* here below, from whence the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God, may not only be sufficiently justified, but is exceedingly illustrated in this Variety of Dispensation.

And

And accordingly we find the *Prophet* in the *Text*, introduceth the Supreme Being making this Declaration of himself, *I am the Lord, and there is none else, I form the Light, and create Darknefs; I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all these things.* Which Words being directed to *Cyrus* King of *Persia*, were spoken, as *Learned Men* have generally thought, in Opposition to the *Persian* Sect of the *Magians*, who then held *Light* and *Darknefs*, or *Good* and *Evil* to be the Supreme Beings: That *Light* or the *Good God* was the Author of all Good, and that *Darknefs* or the *Evil God* was the Author of all Evil; and that of the Mixture of these two, as they were in a continual Struggle with each other, all things were made: This *Opinion* prevailed long in the *East*, was revived by the *Authors* of the *Manichean* Sect, and hath not wanted some who have very strenuously maintained it in the present Age, as the only possible Method to account for the Mixture of *Evil* in *Life*.

In Opposition to which very mistaken Notion, injurious to the Divine Nature, and destructive of all Religion, we find that God here declares himself the Sole Author of all things, the Dispenser of all that Variety which we call Good and Evil in Life, and seems expressly to assert it, as the Prerogative of his Nature, that he hath equally made both *Good* and *Evil*.



But

But the Difficulty still returneth, and rather encreaseth, how from a good God Evil can proceed, how infinite Goodness joined with equal Wisdom and Power, could produce so much Misery in Human Life, from whence therefore can we account for all the Evil and Woe, which we see and suffer and lament under the Sun.

Thus the *Cause and Origin of Evil*, hath been a very ancient and important Question, and Learned Men in all Ages have undertaken to vindicate Divine Providence in this particular: First, by shewing the Absurdity of two contrary Principles, and the absolute Contradiction of a necessary Self-Existent Principle of Evil: They then accounted for the natural Evil of this World, from the finite and limited Nature of *Matter*, and the necessary Laws of *Motion*, whereby some Evil or seeming Irregularity could not be prevented, but by destroying those Principles from whence every thing that is good and regular proceeds; all which Methods of *Solution* are purely *Philosophical* and of another *Place*.

I think it more becoming the *Duty* of this *Place*, to account for Natural Evil, and vindicate Divine Providence, by shewing the *Final Cause*, or *Moral End* of *Natural Evil*, and for what great and wise Purposes the Wisdom and Goodness of God were pleased to mix so much Evil in human Life: Which as it will
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unfold the *true end of Providence in this World*, so it will naturally lead us into such Considerations as are most suitable to the *present Solemnity*, which the *Wisdom and Piety of Publick Authority* have appointed for a *General Fast and Humiliation*, to be observed in the most devout and humble manner, to deprecate those Judgments which our Sins have deserved, and that God may continue to preserve us from the Plague, which now rages in a Neighbouring Nation, and is the greatest *Natural Evil*, that the Wrath of Heaven can inflict upon Mankind.

Now to shew the *Moral End of Natural Evil*, we may observe, First,

1. Righteousness or Obeying the Commands of God, and living up to the Obligations of Reason and Religion, as it is the Perfection of our Nature, so it is the End and Perfection of all the Works of God, since all things were made for Man, and Man to glorifie the Maker of all Things: This beautiful Frame of Beings which surrounds us, and which with so much Wonder we behold, was fitted up as a Scene, whereon to exercise the Duty and Obedience of a Rational Creature, all its Varieties and Changes are to advance the Design, and the whole shall be dissolved, when this great Work is effected, and Righteousness perfected in the Sight of God.

Now

Now as Virtue and Holiness are the chief End of Man, and this Life designed for his State of Trial and Probation, it is evident that the Nature of things about him, must be fitted up in such a manner, as might best answer this End and Design, which never could be done by a perpetual Course of Success and Enjoyment, but is admirably answered by the present Mixture of *Evil* and Disappointment in Human Life.

For if we consider the Frame of Human Nature, we shall find it so constituted, as almost wholly to acquiesce in present Enjoyment, and entirely employed on the Object of it's Desires: An uninterrupted Course of Pleasure and Success sooths all the Powers of the Soul, and lulls them asleep in the deepest Security, a Lethargick Acquiescence seizes upon it's Faculties, and renders them useless to the Purposes of Honour and Virtue.

It was therefore necessary to alarm and awaken such a Being, with a constant Doubt of the Continuance of it's Enjoyments, and an anxious Fear of some impending Evil, to rouse the Spirits, and put all the Faculties of the Soul in a Posture of Defence.

That such is the Nature of Man is evident from Experience, and perhaps was absolutely necessary in a Being of such a mixed Nature, for the Natural and Inferior Appetites must acquiesce in present En-
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joyment, and Reason is so nearly allied to Sense, by the present Laws of Union between Soul and Body, that it seems to consent with too little Reluctance, and is apt to take too much Complaisance in it.

A Being so constituted could only be awakened from present Enjoyment, by a Doubt of it's Continuance, and an Apprehension of some impending Evil, and this necessarily introduceth the whole Train of *Natural Evils*, for since God was pleased to make this World a state of *Trial and Probation*, his Wisdom and Goodness were necessarily engaged to furnish it with suitable Motives and Incitements to quicken the Obedience of Rational Creatures.

So that what we call Natural Evil in Life, is so far from being an Imperfection in the Works of God, that it was absolutely necessary to his great Design, which was to lead Men by proper and rational Motives, to the Practise of Virtue and Obedience to his Will, for this being the constant Design of Providence, the frequent Interposition of Natural Evil was necessary to alarm the Consciences of Men, and they could hardly acquiesce entirely in the Enjoyment of Worldly Things, which they found by experience were so fleeting and transitory, which would naturally lead them to consider the true Condition of this Life, and to expect much greater Degrees of Happiness and Perfection in a Future State: Thus we see the Foundations

dations of Moral Virtue laid in Natural Evil, and the Belief and Expectation of a better Life arising from the Misery and Disappointment of this: For if there had been no Natural Evil, all our Desires satisfied, all our Projects successful, we might possibly have argued that this was our Final State: As we could not have desired, we should not have believed that a better was to come; so that to remove Natural Evil out of the World, is to take away the Foundation of Virtue and Religion our Obligations in this World, and Expectations of the next.

But Secondly, as we thus see the Design of Providence in Natural Evil, so the Proportion and Degree of the Mixture of Evil in Life, is a further Confirmation of the Truth of this Point.

The Divine Goodness is abundantly discovered in the general Disposition of the Works of Nature and Providence, the indulgent Hand of Heaven hath made such large Provision for the Gratification of it's Creatures, that Good doth infinitely exceed the Evil in Life: So that the Favourers of the *Manichean Scheme* were under no Necessity of having Recourse to their *Contrary Principle*; for the Main of Life is tolerably easie, and the Evil we sometimes suffer, bears no Proportion to the Good we almost always enjoy: And here I must be understood of *Natural Evil* purely and simply considered as such, for the Evils and

Misery of Life, are chiefly owing to *Moral Evil*, or the Vices and Follies of Men, which have indeed encreased the Evils of Life to a very great Degree; but this is not from God but our selves, not the Work of his Hand, but the Corruption of our Hearts, and serves admirably to shew how vast the Difference is, between what is laid upon us by him, and what we suffer from one another, and our selves.

So that *Natural Evil* is not like the Rage of an Enemy, but the Admonition of a Friend, or the Correction of a Parent, who mixes some Discipline with his most indulgent Care, there is just enough to awaken our Attention and Awe, and to shew that we are not wholly left and abandoned to our selves.

And this is evident from the small Effect it hath on the Generality of Men, who boldly pursue their Lusts and Passions, and never attend to the Evil or Misery of Life, but look upon the World as a Place designed only for their Pleasure, and fitted up for their Entertainment; so that if we look upon this World, as a State of Trial and Probation, it was not perhaps possible to mix less Evil in Life, and the Divine Goodness like an indulgent Parent, useth the gentlest Methods to keep us in Obedience, and hath left us as much to our selves, and under the easiest Discipline, as could possibly be consistent with the Designs of his Providence.

Thus

Thus we have all the Motives and Encouragements to Duty and Virtue, and a full Latitude for the Exercise of a Rational Obedience, at once we see the Goodness and Severity of God, to work on the different Tempers of Men, and lead them to Repentance and Submission to his Will, by all the Arguments of Terror and Indulgence ; *In the Day of Prosperity we may rejoice, but in the Day of Adversity we must consider,* and it's for this Reason *that God hath set the one over against the other* : Such is the Doctrine of Reason and Scripture in this Matter, and thus the Spirit of God, in the third Chapter of *Ecclesiastes*, instructs us about the Variety of human Life, that *to every Thing there is a Season, and a Time to every Purpose under Heaven*, and then he adds a very full Enumeration, of the vast Change and Mixture of Good and Evil in the World, and infers that *this is the Travel which God hath given to the Sons of Men to be exercised in it*, the Method of Divine Discipline to try their Virtue and Obedience : And argues, that this Variety is so far from being an Objection to the Divine Goodness, that *every thing is therefore beautiful in it's Season*, or hath it's peculiar End and Design, to which it is more particularly adapted : And then concludes, with Acknowledgment and Admiration of the Divine Wisdom, *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever*, is founded upon Immutable and Eternal Reason, *nothing*

thing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, each Part being absolutely necessary to compleat the whole Design, for God doth it that Men should fear before him. Eccl. 3. 14. Thus the Spirit of God unfolds the true Reason of the Mixture of Evil in human Life, it's that Men should fear before him, this being their State of Trial and Probation, for as it followeth in the next Verse, *God requireth that which is past.*

But Thirdly, Having thus laid down both from *Reason* and *Scripture*, the general Doctrine of the *Moral End of Natural Evil*, I shall now proceed to an Induction of the most remarkable Particulars of what we call Evil in human Life, by which we may discover the *true Final Cause* of all we see, and suffer, and lament under the Sun.

And First, We complain of the *Frailty* and *Shortness of Life*, that our *Days are few and evil, and full of Trouble*, and that our *Years pass away like a Tale that is told*: and indeed if we look upon this Life as our only State, the Difficulty is inexplicable, nor can we possibly reconcile it with the Goodness or Justice of God; whereas the present Continuance and Circumstances of human Life, are admirably proportioned to a State of Trial, and evidently shew the Intention of Heaven: For had Life been longer or more certain in it's Continuance, our Projects for Wealth and Advancement had been endless, and we may easily

sily imagine how insatiable our Desires had been, when under all it's Casualty, and all it's Uncertainty, we are so apt to promise our selves a long Continuance: How often do we reckon on the Lives of others, and there Place our Comfort, Dependance, and Security, and almost fix upon it as our chief Good, till the frail beloved Life is suddenly snatched away, and we then perceive how vain all Things are here below.

And Providence hath very fully declared it's Design in this particular, when it reduced Human Life to it's Present Compass, for the Wickedness of the *Antediluvian World* grew to an excessive Height, when so long a Life gave Security of Enjoyment, and raised the Natural Pride and Insolence of it's Possessors; What Evils should we suffer from the Avarice, and Oppression of some Men, if they were to live a Thousand Years, into how few Hands would Property be reduced; how easily might an Universal Monarchy be established by the continued Views and Application of one Ambitious Prince possessed of Power for several Ages, and how destructive would such a Power be of the Happiness of Mankind: Thus when we would lessen *Natural Evil*, *Moral Evil* encreaseth, whilst God Almighty holdeth all things in an *Equal Ballance*, and hath admirably proportioned them to such a Degree as serves the great Design of his Providence; thus
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Life is long enough to make Trial of our Obedience, and improve our Faculties in the Knowledge of his Will, to be convinced of the Folly and Vanity of this Life, and serve him in Hope and Expectation of a better, and instruct others in the Ways of Virtue and Religion, that his Praise may continue from Generation to Generation.

If this Life were the whole of the Continuance of our Being, it might then indeed be lamented as short, but our Appearance in this World is but one Period of it's Revolution, to prepare it for those Wondrous Changes, those high Degrees of Happiness and Perfection, it shall at last attain in it's future State.

Another *Natural Evil* we are subject to in this Life, are *Sickness* and *Pain*, which as they are absolutely necessary to our Mortal Condition, and preparatory to our Final Dissolution, so they are a frequent Admonition of our present State, and must rationally induce us to hope and believe that so frail and uneasy a Condition cannot be the only one that is designed for our Nature. To how many Temptations does vigorous uninterrupted Health expose us, how do the Spirits grow giddy and insolent in the Gayety of Youth, and unmindful of the Obligations of Virtue and Religion, and we should perhaps go careless on in so delightful a Path, if Reason and Reflexion were

were not powerfully awakened by the Evils and Uneasinesses we meet with in Life.

For Sickness and Pain, and the Advances of Age, are so many Admonitions of the Frailty of our Condition, and most strongly convince us that *it is not good for us always to be here*, whilst they serve many other useful Purposes of Life : For had all Men continued young, and vigorous, and healthy, it is scarce to be imagined what Riot and Confusion there would be in the World, no Council, no Gravity, no Order, no Advice, but all Presumption, Vanity, Dissoluteness and Licence ; so that even Society could not have been preserved, without the Authority and Experience of Age, the Terror of Punishment, the Infliction of Pain, and the Obligation that lieth on all Men to submit to order and Discipline ; and thus when weak Man would alter the Designs of Heaven, he introduceth nothing but Confusion.

And as Sickness and Pain are necessary to our Final Dissolution, and frequently admonish us of the Frailty of our Condition, so they depend so much on the Practice of Virtue, as to be almost entirely of Moral Consideration : For our Bodies would continue in a very tolerable Degree of Health and Ease, if we did not impair them by our Riot and Excess, and we precipitate that Dissolution by our Carelessness and Intemperance, which Nature designed should come on

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with a slow, a gentle, and an equal Pace : And it is scarce to be imagined how much the Force and Virulence of Distempers have been encreased by Hereditary Intemperance, by which the Constitutions of some Families are so wonderfully impaired, as to make the wretched Heir a Spectacle of Pity, an unhappy Monument of the Luxury of his Ancestors ; to shew what a Curse Ancient Wealth may be, when it is not well employed, and to keep others from entailing Misery on their innocent Projeny ; thus most Distempers seem designed as a Sanction for Virtue, as almost the necessary Consequence of Vice and Excess, and sometimes Providence introduceth New Ones into the World, to give a New Sanction and Motive to Obedience, to shew us the infinite Evil of transgressing his *Laws*, and that he will not suffer even the Race of Mankind to continue, or be beheld without Horror, but by Conformity to them.

But besides *Sickness and Pain*, there is *Emptiness and Dissatisfaction* even in our Pleasures and Enjoyments, even the Good we embrace deceiveth our Expectation, and when we look upon the Work that our Hands have done, in which we laboured, and thought our selves wise and happy, behold all is *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, and we find at last *we have no Pleasure in them* : This is indeed a *very great Natural Evil*, arising plainly from our Frame and Make, and runs thro'

thro' and embitters all our Enjoyments, but was evidently calculated to shew us the Emptiness of all things here below, that our Nature was designed for nobler Purposes, that we have a Reach and Capacity that nothing can come up to, nothing can fill; and naturally leads us, like a Noble and Divine Instinct, to the Belief and Expectation of another State, where we shall meet with Objects proportioned to our Capacities, and all the Powers of the Soul may acquiesce in their Enjoyment.

Another *Evil* we suffer and complain of in Life, is the *Labour and Difficulty we find in making Provision for our Support*, whereas if the Fruits of the Earth had been spontaneously produced with greater Encrease, the Condition of Life had been more comfortable and easy, and Mankind been freed from much Labour and Sorrow.

But what Riot and Disorder would such a Plenty have introduced, how would it have confounded and dissolved all the Orders and Offices of Life, an Universal Plenty without Labour, Thought or Care, had been the most destructive Project, that could possibly be imagined, such a mistaken inconsistent Good would only be productive of numberless Evils, and convince us how unfit we are to choose for our selves: For how would Mankind have been employed, how would all his Faculties have been impaired, by Luxury and

Sloth, how stupid and wretched would he have been, without the Order, and Culture, and Decency, that Art, and Labour, and Necessity have introduced, how excessive had been the Luxury of such a rude and untaught Creature, how abandoned to the present, how thoughtless of what was to come; such a Plenty would have been as pernicious and destructive as a Famine or a Plague: We see some of the Effects of Plenty in Affluent Fortunes, and the exalted Conditions of Life, we see to what Temptations such Stations are exposed, and how easily and naturally they fall into Sloth and Luxury and a Neglect of all the Offices of Honour and Virtue, unless a happy Turn of Mind improved by Education makes them watchful against the Dangers, to which such Conditions are too subject: But to make all Mankind affluent without Labour or Care, were to confound all the Orders and Offices of Life, and make the whole Race of Mankind stupid, wicked, and wretched.

But the Seasons do not always answer our Industry and Care, we toil and labour, and yet are disappointed in our Harvest, the fruits of the Earth are spoiled and blasted; Success is not answerable to the Probability of our Hopes and Endeavours, *The Race is not to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong*, and this contributes to the Misery and Disappointment of Life.

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But this Variety, Change and Uncertainty in the Fortunes and Events of Life, establish Providence, and secure our Dependance on the Supream Being; if Success had always answered the Probability of second Causes, we might have imagined the Course of Things to have been a Chain of necessary Effects, and depended too much on our own Prudence and Choice: If Care and Industry, and Abilities always produced a never-failing Harvest of Plenty and Success, the Mind would grow insolent, and attribute too much to it self, as independant and self-sufficient: Whereas when contrary Events blast the Designs of the Wise, and unforeseen Accidents bring to nothing the Councils of the Prudent, when something interposes that *turns all things backward*, which Human Wisdom could neither foresee nor prevent, then we grow humble and dependant, and acknowledge the Power of an all disposing Cause.

How easily do Wealth and Power promise Pleasure and Success, and the stronger undertake to invade the weak and defenceless, if happy Accidents did not sometimes interpose, if Orders mistaken, false Intelligence, and unsuspected Stratagem did not often snatch the Weak out of the Hand of the Mighty, and make the most Formidable Undertakings prove abortive, if contrary Winds and Tempestuous Waves did not baffle the Designs of Men, and disappoint
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the intended Mischief of the best concerted Expeditions : And these are always represented as under the Peculiar Direction of God's Providence, for *he bringeth the Winds out of his Treasures, he ruleth the Rage of the Sea, the Noise of it's Waves, and Wind and Storm fulfil his Word* : This keeps Mankind in a constant Dependence on his Pleasure, and makes them apply to him for Success in all their Undertakings ; if there had been no Variety in the Seasons, no failure in the Productions of Nature, no Dangers in Travel by Land or by Water, no Changes or Chances in Human Life, Man had grown forgetful of so indulgent a Being, and looked no farther than the Necessity of present Causes ; whereas he is now kept in perpetual Alarm, the Elements that surround him, all in restless Agitation, and striving to break and dissolve his Frame, the Fruit of all his Labours exposed to the sudden Changes of the Weather, and the Success of his Undertakings depending on the Winds and the Waves, and numberless Accidents which he can neither foresee nor prevent.

And thus all the Appearances of Nature, even Thunder and Earthquakes, tho' Natural in their Cause, yet are Moral in their Effect, for when Thunder and Lightning are let loose and seem to threaten all, the Tyrant trembles in the midst of his Guards, and knows not but the pointed Vengeance is aimed at his
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his devoted Head ; or when the Earthquake shakes his Palace, he knows not how to secure himself from a Power that seems to threaten such a Universal Ruin : And it was very necessary for the Good of Mankind, that all Men should be subject to some Admonition, that even they who were grown too great for human Justice, should yet know, that *he that is higher than the Highest regards them, and that there are higher than they.*

Such a Situation was admirably contrived for so thoughtless and stupid, so proud and presumptuous a Creature as Man naturally is, to alarm his Fears, to keep him in perpetual Attention and Awe, to abate the Pride, and Insolence and Self-sufficiency of his Nature, and make him humble and depending, to make him address himself to Heaven for the supply of all his Wants, and pray for Success in all his Undertakings, to resign his whole Conduct to the Will of God, who only can preserve him from such Variety of Evils.

Thus the Uncertainty of Things in this Life, keeps us always dependant on the Providence of God, and the whole Course of Nature is so ordered, as to seem calculated for this very End: And herein consists the Ballance of Divine Providence in this Life, there is such a general Probability in the Train of Events, as is sufficient to encourage our Prudence and Industry, there is such a secret Interposition of unforeseen Accidents,

cidents, as to secure our Dependance on the Providence of God, they both together declare his Wisdom and his Goodness, shew us the true End of our Being, and give us a Noble and Instructive Scheme of the Design of Providence in *Natural Evil*.

And thus we may account for all the Misery and Inequalities in the Dispensations of this Life, and look upon Divine Vengeance as watching our Steps, constantly admonishing us by the general Course of Natural Evil, and raising her Voice, and encreasing her Terrors, in Proportion to our Stupidity and Transgressions, till at last she loudly threatens in Judgments, which Providence hath sometimes Recourse to, when it's ordinary Methods of Admonition prove ineffectual: For *Judgments* are a Degree of Natural Evil above the common Course, and rise in Proportion to the Measure of Men's Offences, they are the extraordinary Methods of God's instructing and correcting Mankind, when the general Course of Natural Evil is passed by unregarded, and nothing can awaken them but an Universal Calamity, by Inundation, Famine, Plague, or any other Evil with which God in his Anger afflicts Mankind.

And indeed, among all the Evils to which we are subject in this Life, there is none so destructive, sudden and universal as *Pestilential Distemper*, which hath always been looked upon as the immediate Work
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of God, and the most dreadful Instrument of Divine Displeasure: For it depends on Causes so secret in Nature, seizes so suddenly on all Temperaments and Constitutions, baffles the vain Efforts of human Skill, propagates it self in so amazing a Manner, till at last it spreads such an Universal Ruin, that nothing hath so many Marks of a peculiar Work of Providence, and the Supream Being never appears so dreadful to Mankind, or Mankind so wretched, abject and defenceless, as when this most terrible of all Judgments is abroad upon the Earth.

It's Progress also is so uncertain, what Course the destroying Angel will next take so unknown, and all Precautions sometimes rendered so fruitless, that it keeps the whole World in Attention and Awe, none can tell who is next devoted to Destruction, but all stand amazed, and wait the Will of Heaven, so that it is in all Respects the most awakening Judgment, and aptest to alarm the Consciences of Men.

And as it's Rise is unknown, it's Progress most dreadful, so it's Continuance is most uncertain, sometimes ceasing suddenly without any appearing Cause, and stopping at once, when human Skill seemed baffled, and all was abandoned to Despair; to shew that the Supream Being hath reserved it entirely in his own Hand, and most peculiarly adapts it to the Punishment and Amendment of Mankind.

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This dreadful Judgment is now abroad in the Earth, depopulating some of the most fertile Provinces of Europe, and making desolate whole Cities that flourished in Wealth and Commerce: Humanity and Good Nature for the Sufferings of our Fellow Creatures, and Fellow Christians have been sufficiently alarmed by a long Succession of dismal Accounts, of the dreadful Progress and Devastation it hath made, and we have all mourned and lamented in secret, for our Brethren thus lying under the afflicting Hand of God; and now Authority hath called us together to lament in common, jointly to deprecate the Divine Displeasure, and offer up the humblest Supplications to Almighty God, *for them and for our selves*. For we know not what Course it will next take, or whether the destroying Angel will be sent, we must therefore consider the Situation we are in, and learn how to behave our selves under this Divine Judgment which is now in the Earth.

I. And *First*, We must assure our selves, that as all things are under the immediate Direction of Almighty God, so this Judgment hath happened by his particular Appointment, and however unforeseen, or undetermined, these Powers of Matter and Motion may seem to us, yet they are all directed by the most unerring Hand, and guided for the Attainment of the peculiar Ends of his Providence; why it should
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first seize on some rather than others, must be all resolved into his Supream Will, and absolutely submitted to the wise Disposer of all things, but here we have Occasion to acknowledge his Goodness towards us, that we were not made the first Example of his Vengeance, but have time to *repent and amend our Ways*, and so by our Amendment to avert his Judgments, or prepare our selves for them.

Nor may we superciliously or maliciously interpret these Instances of Divine Displeasure against *People or Nations*, as if they were Sinners above all the *Inhabitants of the Earth*, our *Blessed Saviour* hath forbid all such uncharitable Reflections, and hath taught us how to make all such Calamities not matter of Pharisaical Ostentation, but useful to our selves, in that admirable Conclusion, on a like Occasion, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

II. For Secondly, As we know such Judgments are under the Divine Appointment and Direction, so we must assure our selves that they are sent to awaken the Consciences of Men, and lead them to Repentance and Reformation of Life, for the Punishment of them who suffer, and for an Admonition to the rest; it is by the Goodness of God that this dreadful Calamity is as yet to us not a Punishment, but an Admonition, and if it hath that Effect in the Amendment of our Lives, the Design of Heaven will be

fully answered, and we may escape, for it is for this End *this Judgment is abroad in the Earth, that the Inhabitants of the World may learn Righteousness.*

Let us therefore hearken to this Divine Admonition, and tho' we have often neglected the still Voice of his Mercy, and been deaf to all the endearing Offers of his Goodness and loving Kindness, yet let us not audaciously defie his Vengeance, and stop our Ears against this Loud Thunder of his Anger. For now Heaven gives a new Sanction to all it's Laws, and seems to threaten universal Extirpation; the *Wrath of God is now declared in a New and Extraordinary Manner against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, the bloody Standard of Death is erected in the midst of the Earth, and the Supreme Being appears armed with all his Ministers of Vengeance: How dreadful would be the Sword of that devouring Angel, if God should be provoked by our Vices and our Follies, to send him among us *to kill and to destroy*: For the Divine Vengeance is now in Motion, *the Lord is come out of his Place, to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity, he hath bent his Bow, he hath made it ready, he hath prepared the Instruments of Death*; but *who could abide the Day of his coming, who could stand when he appeareth*, all would be Ruin, Distraction and Desolation, *the Earth would disclose her Blood, and would no more cover her Slain.*

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What an Aggravation would it be to our Guilt and our Folly, that we have pulled down this Vengeance on our own Heads, and involved our Country and our Friends in so dreadful a Calamity, that when the Divine Goodness had put some stop to his destroying Angel, and seemed to wait for our Amendment, we should again provoke his Fury, rekindle *this devouring Flame*, as a People wholly abandoned to themselves, and devoted to Destruction.

So that nothing can avert this Evil but our Repentance and Reformation, the Natural Evils in the common Course of Providence have not been sufficient to awaken our Consciences, our Pride and Luxury have not been abated tho' we all see the Fatal Consequences of those Vices, in the Wretchedness of our Fellow Subjects, and the manifold Inconveniences of a National Poverty, and have been forced to relieve the Manufactures of a whole City by a publick Charity, and yet have ever since taken the Surest Methods to reduce them again to the same Extremity : 'Tis Luxury and Pride, the Living contrary to Nature, and above our Condition, that are the Cause of all our Evils, hence Rapine and Oppression, Misery and Poverty, the Insolence of Power, and a Contempt of all the Laws of Duty and Decency, the Rich destroyed with indigested Excess, the Poor perishing with wretched Want, hence Murmuring and Defiance,
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Mutual Distrust and Despair, and Men set against one another to destroy themselves: Thus our Vices and our Follies, besides their private personal Inconvenience, have involved us in much National Calamity, and should we farther provoke the Divine Vengeance to visit us with the dreadful Calamity of a *devouring Plague*, we then should see, that the greatest Evil that Mankind can suffer, or Heaven can inflict, is the genuine Product of our obstinate Disobedience, and that our Ruin will be compleated, if *our Iniquities are full*.

III. But farther, as Repentance and Reformation are the chief Design of God in the Infliction of Judgments, and the great Means of averting them, so he hath allowed us the Use of other subordinate Means, under the Direction of his Providence, such as Prudence and Caution may suggest: For such is the exact Poise of things in this Life, that all our Powers and Faculties have their proper Weight and Effect, we may suffer by our Carelessness, as well as by our Sins, and are obliged to pursue the best Informations of Reason, as well as to practice the Duties of Religion: Some *whole Nations* have strangely erred in this Point, and by a fatal Stupidity, and mistaken Resignation to the Will of God, have made such Distempers almost perpetual amongst them: Whereas we are instructed in the Duties both of Reason and Religion

Religion, and better understand what we owe to God, our Neighbour, and our selves; the Prudence of the Magistrate took early Precautions to prevent the spreading of this dreadful Contagion, and *the Wisdom of this great Council of the Nation* hath already made it it's earliest Care, and exerted themselves with the utmost Diligence and Application, with a Zeal inflamed with a Love of their Country and the publick Safety, to find out the most proper and effectual Methods, to hinder it from being imported among us: And it is our Duty and Interest most exactly to obey such Commands, and upon no Account whatsoever to violate a Restriction so necessary to our own and the Publick Good. The wretched Avarice of one unhappy Man first brought this Distemper into a Neighbouring Nation, a greedy Appetite of Gain like a Fiend let loose from Hell, hath involved that Country in greater Ruin and Desolation, than the destructive Sword of the most cruel War could have done: We see how fatal our Passions may become, how closely *Natural and Moral Evil* are blended together, and when joined, what Universal Ruin they may spread; how hated therefore and accursed would his Memory be in all succeeding Ages, who for any Consideration, should import this dreadful Evil into this Country, or suffer or connive at the Importation of any thing that might bring this Infection amongst
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us; we must therefore with the utmost Care and Caution labour to prevent so great an Evil, and by obeying the Commands of Authority, take all prudent Measures to preserve our Country and our selves.

IV. But Fourthly, Since all our Caution may prove ineffectual, and Providence provoked by our Sins and our Folly, may determine to bring this Evil upon us, let us consider how we must behave our selves in so fatal a Circumstance. T[']is indeed *a dreadful Supposition*, what Hurry! What Confusion! What Distraction would there be upon it's first Appearance! But this we must if possible prevent; we have already had sufficient Warning of it's Approach, the Divine Judgment hath moved slowly and solemnly on; we must therefore prepare our selves, and consider how we may prevent it's spreading when amongst us, and take all proper and effectual Methods to relieve those who first fall under God's afflicting Hand: The Wisdom and Authority of the Publick Magistrate must make Provision for a general Relief in this extraordinary Case. I shall only observe to you, that this will be the best Occasion for the most Flowing and Extensive Charity that can possibly happen, for to relieve and provide for the Cure of the infected, abates the Virulence, and will prevent the spreading of the Distemper, here Charity will become necessary, and if we neglect our Neighbour, we destroy our selves.

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Nature and Instinct and self-Preservation will powerfully prompt us to make all Provision for our own Security, but let us take Care that we make it not in such a Manner as may prove more fatal to us in the End; for if there be not a constant liberal Provision made for the Poor, when Commerce may be stopped, and Manufactures neglected, Famine will grow as universal, and destructive as the Plague, Necessity will beget Violence, and the present Terror of Death, and Despair at their wretched Condition, put them upon all the Methods of Rapine and Villany, and the Violation of all Laws Divine and Human; and then it is absolutely the Completion of all Human Misery: Pain and Distraction, Violence and Wrong, dying Persons deprived of the last Necessaries of Life, and the Murder of Wretches under the Agonies of Death, Horror and Confusion, Blasphemy and Despair, all *Moral* and *Natural* Evils blended together, to shew the utmost Vengeance of an offended God, upon a People *whose Iniquities and Misery are full.*

V. But Fifthly and Lastly, Let us while there is yet time prevent all these Evils, let us in *this our Day* see the things which belong unto our Peace, before they be for ever hid from our Eyes: Let us turn to God with Prayer, Repentance, and Reformation of Life, humbly to deprecate the Divine Displeasure, and implore

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his Mercy for this sinful Land : It is for this Purpose we are all here met together, prostrating our selves before the Throne of Grace, with the *deepest Humiliation, with Fastling, and with Prayer, acknowledging our Vileness, and repenting of our Faults, acknowledging how helpless we are, and how wretched we may be, if God in his Displeasure should bring this Desolation amongst us.*

Turn ye therefore to the Lord, with all your Hearts, with Fasting, with Weeping, and with Mourning, and rent your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil, who knoweth but he will return and repent, and leave a Blessing behind him : And then as it followeth in the same Prophet, Sanctify a Fast, call a solemn Assembly, gather the People, assemble the Elders, let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to Reproach : Let us thus behave our selves until this Indignation be over past, let us apply all our Endeavours against so great an Evil, and make use of all Rational and Religious Methods, let every one turn from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in his hands, for then God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce Anger that we perish not, then the Lord will be entreated for this Land, and
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On the 8th. of December, 1721.

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pity his People: Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant thro' Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.

F I N I S.

